

Testimony for Senate Appropriations Committee

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Views of the American Academy of Diplomacy

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Dear Chairman Graham and Senator Leahy,

Thank you for this opportunity for me to provide the perspective of the American Academy of Diplomacy on the current State Department Budget proposal and potential reorganization. The Academy is an organization of the nation's most distinguished former diplomats, both career and non-career. It is a non-partisan, non-governmental organization dedicated to strengthening American diplomacy.

We believe that a strong diplomacy is essential to American security and that such a diplomacy must rest on a strong State Department. This, in turn requires a strong Foreign Service and a strong Civil Service. The multiplicity of American interests around the globe from security and peace-making to protecting citizens and promoting business demands a complex and functioning institution. And, as even the most cursory list of interests illustrates, it is a job done mostly overseas. It is from these basic principles that we derive our comments on reorganization and the budget.

The Administration's Proposed Budget Injures American Security

Both reorganization and the budget must reflect value judgments about the goals American diplomacy is organized to advance. It is in this regard that we have the most profound disagreement with the proposed budget, which is more likely to weaken American security than to promote it.

Military operations take place for political purposes. It is diplomacy that is crucial to building enduring solutions before, during and after combat. This is a currently ongoing situation with multiple high priority needs in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. We do not understand how these tasks can be managed with a 42 percent cut in Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) from FY 2017.

There can and should be debate about how much the United States spends on humanitarian and developmental assistance. But to largely turn our back on humanitarian needs or not even to do our part in development seems both a moral failing and an invitation to resentment. Our contributions to refugees and development are critical to avoid humanitarian crises from spiraling into conflicts that would draw in the United States and promote violent extremism.

We believe the approximately 37 percent cut in UN peacekeeping funding is misguided. Peacekeeping and political missions are mandated by the Security Council where our veto power can ensure when, where, how many, and what kind of peacekeepers are used in a mission that support US interests. Peacekeeping forces are deployed in fragile, sometimes prolonged, circumstances, where the US would not want to use US forces. UN organized troops cost the US taxpayer only about one-eighth the cost of sending US troops. Budget cuts of the amounts contemplated endanger basic US security interests.

Our contributions to refugees and development are critical to avoid humanitarian crises from spiraling into conflicts that would draw in the United States and promote violent extremism. Eliminating the Presidentially-directed, Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) account and cutting the Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) are contradictory to the basic humanitarianism manifested by the Statue of Liberty.

The proposed cuts to public diplomacy and educational exchanges seem to us similarly misguided. This is a time when our longstanding commitments to the institutions on which the world has relied for security and prosperity for more than seventy years are called into doubt. Surely part of prudent policy will be to explain our intentions and our policies to others.

Educational exchange is one of those long term policies whose evident merit has received broad bipartisan support over many years. Hundreds of thousands of foreign students have studied in the United States and gained an understanding of Americans and American culture. This is far more effective in countering radical propaganda than social media. The American Immigration Law Foundation estimates that 46 current and 165 former heads of government are US graduates. Yet according to USGLC the 2018 proposal of \$285 million for Educational and Cultural Exchanges (ECE) is a 55% reduction from 2017. These cuts will affect almost every program. For example, the Fulbright program will be cut 47% from 2017 levels. The citizen exchange program would be cut by 58%. The resulting loss of international comprehension of the United States would be a self-inflicted wound.

Chairman Graham, Senator Leahy, it is neither the purpose nor the intention of the Academy to take positions on every aspect of the budget. In fact, we would normally not take policy positions at all. That we do so now is only because the drastic cuts of the proposed budget, of which the foregoing are merely some examples, required response.

Cuts of the magnitude proposed would be a disaster for America's long term security that rest extensively on the strength of our diplomacy. Where reductions must be made they should be attentive to maintaining the long term strength of our diplomatic institutions, especially the Foreign Service. Cut programs before people should be a watchword because programs can more easily be rebuilt than can damage to the preparation of staff.

Principles and Recommendations for Reorganization

The Academy does not oppose sensible streamlining and elimination of positions in order to promote efficiency. The State Department has gone through many reorganizations over the

years and a top to bottom look makes some sense. There are cuts and streamlining that we recommend as well as principles to keep in mind. To turn to specifics:

Diplomacy is accomplished primarily overseas. Basically, the overseas presence should be maintained both for its daily mission and to position the United States to respond to crises. To take just a few examples, when the Islamic State suddenly appeared in Mali it was our Embassy that was able to recommend action based on knowing the difference between terrorists and local political actors that needed support. When Ebola in West Africa threatened a worldwide pandemic it was our Foreign Service who remained in place to establish the bases for and support the multi-agency health efforts deployed to stop the disease. It is to our embassies that American citizens turn for security and evacuation abroad. Our embassies commercial work supports hundreds of US companies and citizens in selling abroad. This supports thousands of American jobs. Every dollar spent on this work returns hundreds in sales. Neither America's security nor its economic prospects can be advanced by drastic reductions to our overseas presence and the savings from doing so are inconsequential in terms of the federal budget.

Effective diplomacy must maintain a strong Foreign Service. The Congress recognized this in passing the Foreign Service Act of 1980 (the Act). ***One essential of a strong Foreign Service is that the annual intake of Foreign Service personnel should not be terminated nor drastically reduced.*** Unlike the Civil Service, the Foreign Service has a flow-through up-and-out system, aligned with military practice. Interruptions in regular Foreign Service recruitment lead to serious personnel gaps years later. The last such break in recruitment in the 1990's is one of the reasons that the Service had too limited a "bench" of highly qualified senior officers in recent years; gaps, not wars, were largely responsible for the increased hiring necessary in the last decade. As we speak ***State has still not made a decision to bring in the July entry class of Foreign Service Officers. This is a serious mistake that will injure the Service for many years. It should be corrected.***

It is doubly serious because the Foreign Service, as up-or-out service will lose about 300 - 400 FSOs and Specialists each year by selection out for low ranking, expiration of time in class, failure to pass over a promotion threshold or reaching the mandatory retirement age of 65.

That said, the Department of State could be more efficiently run and not every cut is a bad idea. There are now 54 special envoys, coordinators, and ambassadors and 68 if one includes the various categories of special and senior advisor. Weed-like, these offices have proliferated. While some of the issues thus managed are important, creating separate offices consumes hundreds of staff positions and frequently duplicates rather than reinforces attention. Many of the functions performed by these offices should be placed in the regular bureaus. These positions and most of their staffs should be eliminated except where the relevant assistant secretary believes one is needed to conduct business for the Department. The Congress could

be helpful by taking a flexible approach to the need for these offices and whether their tasks can be better managed elsewhere.

The Academy supports the removal of the second Deputy Secretary position. We believe it is not needed and has led to overlap and confusion with the other deputy. If the much larger Defense Department can manage with one deputy, so can State.

The number of Under Secretaries has swelled in recent years. Reductions to three or four should be considered. To manage with a smaller number of undersecretaries, consideration should be given to combining bureaus (and therefore reducing the numbers to be supervised), particularly in the functional area, so that the responsibility increases while the structure is reduced.

The number of Deputy Assistant Secretary positions also has grown considerably. These positions can be reduced and more responsibility pushed to office directors and their staffs.

In our view the key positions of Political and Management Under Secretaries, the Director General and the Dean of the Foreign Service Institute should be career Foreign Service Officers. The Director General, a position established by the Act, should be appointed from those that have the senior experience and personal gravitas to look out for the long-term future of the staff needed for an effective diplomacy.

Every administration since Truman's has faced unanticipated interventions overseas. Because the Foreign Service is fully deployed at all times each intervention has found State lacking in its ability to support our interests and our military colleagues with adequate numbers in the field. It is irresponsible to assume this pattern will not repeat. State needs such a surge capacity. Whether this is done through the Stabilization and Crisis Bureau (SCO), reserves, or some other mechanism, the problem needs to be addressed.

The Civil Service needs greater career mobility. In our 2015 report *American Diplomacy at Risk* we proposed one idea for an excepted service within the Civil Service that would allow rotation, including overseas, in return for accepting some of the requirements of rank in person, competitive evaluation, and selection out.

These and other recommendations of the Academy demonstrate that we support sensible reorganization. We do not support changes driven solely to accomplish budget objectives which are seriously misguided. As the Department's reorganization plans come into clearer focus, we would welcome the opportunity to continue providing our views to the Congress.